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ABSTRACT

Recommendations for improving the search, selection, and negotiation for a college president (the term president is used to represent an institution's chief executive officer) are offered, and the social responsibilities of the president are briefly addressed. Aspects of the search that may present problems include: determining institutional needs, the active search, search committee composition and organization, board oversight, communications, confidentiality, and assessment of finalists. Recommendations are as follows: assess college and community needs, decide to spend the money, determine whether outside help is needed, establish a reasonable time frame, establish good relations with the media, actively seek a diverse pool of candidates, seek realistic qualifications, question automatic assumptions, protect the integrity of the process, emphasize thorough and timely communication, clarify expectations of the nominations process, reconsider the use of letters of recommendation, conduct thorough background checks on final candidates, negotiate terms of employment precisely, announce the appointment privately before going public, and plan and assist in the transition. (SW)

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# DECIDING WHO SHALL LEAD

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*Recommendations For Improving Presidential Searches*

**The American Council on Education** is the major voice in American higher education and serves as the locus for discussion and decision-making on higher education issues of national importance. As such, the Council strives to ensure quality education on the nation's campuses.

An independent, nonprofit association founded in 1918, the Council represents all accredited postsecondary institutions as well as national and regional higher education associations. The Council acts as an advocate on behalf of these institutions and organizations before the Congress, the federal government, and federal and state courts.

Through the Center for Leadership Development, the Office of Minority Concerns, and the Office of Women in Higher Education, the Council addresses one of its most important priorities — the identification and advancement of outstanding leaders in higher education.

**The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB)** is a nonprofit, education organization of governing, coordinating, and advisory boards of postsecondary education. Its programs and services serve both volunteer trustees and chief executive officers.

AGB bridges the gap between the theory and the practice of trusteeship and is dedicated to helping governing board members meet their responsibilities. Included in AGB's many functions are activities designed to strengthen good working relationships among presidents, administrators, and trustees; to provide background information on critical issues confronting higher education; and to help boards function with an awareness of the increasing interdependence of all types of colleges and universities.

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There is a growing body of literature on the changing nature of the American college presidency and yet there continues to be disconnection between the qualities needed for particular institutions at particular times and the method of presidential selection.

This publication is an effort on the part of the American Council on Education and the Association of Governing Boards to provide governing boards as well as candidates with some rather pointed advice on the conduct of presidential searches. Ideally, this document would be put in the hands of governing boards before a search process is initiated.

The publication urges, among other things, that sensitive issues such as the terms of employment and the social responsibilities of the president be explicitly and thoroughly discussed and resolved.

In preparing this publication, we have consulted widely with many scholars of the American college presidency and with many presidents and their spouses. But special mention should be made of the three ACE staff members who are the principal authors of the publication. They were persistent, insightful, and thorough and they are: Madeleine Green, Director of the Center for Leadership Development; Donna Shavlik, Director of the Office of Women in Higher Education; and Judy Touchton, Associate Director of the Office of Women. We are also most grateful to our friends in the Association of Governing Boards for joining with us in what we hope will be a most useful publication.

**—Robert H. Atwell**

*President*

American Council on Education

Choosing a new president is the single most critical decision — indeed the most important responsibility — of a governing board. History shows that a college or university might be elevated to a higher level of significance, continue on its traditional course, or begin on a slippery path toward failure as a direct result of the person selected by the board to lead its institution.

The classical search process has, in some cases, worked well; at other times it has failed pathetically. The reputations of both institutions and individuals have been irreparably damaged by what David Riesman has referred to as the "search and destroy" process.

The quality of the board's ultimate decision depends in a surprising degree upon the selection *process* chosen by the board. Selecting a president today involves many factors that were once taken for granted. For instance: the role the president's spouse chooses to assume for the institution; if the spouse wishes not to get involved or if there is no spouse, what arrangement is the college willing to make to aid the president with the social obligations of his or her position? Since the *process* of selecting a president is so critical to an institution's future, the *design* of the process — which must be done and evaluated prior to the beginning of the search — is an urgent imperative of the board at large.

**—Robert L. Gale**

*President*

Association of Governing Boards of

Universities and Colleges

# Deciding Who Shall Lead

Choosing a new president* is both an opportunity and a challenge. It is clearly one of the single most important decisions a governing board makes. In recent years, however, there has been growing criticism of the process by which boards search for their presidents. Many wonder if the typical search process facilitates or actually impedes the goal of providing the best leadership for colleges and universities.

The search process involves many steps to identify the best candidates. Variations in carrying out those steps reflect the great diversity of higher education institutions — their size, type, mission, tradition, and politics. Other variables in the process are the individual differences among persons responsible for the search for, selection of, and the final negotiation with the best candidates. Certain basic principles underlie all effective searches, however. They must be humane, fair, efficient, and flexible enough to meet the needs of the institution and candidates.

This booklet suggests some new approaches boards might take to improve the presidential search and selection process and ultimately their final decisions. It is intended to complement the more extensive treatment of the search process as presented in John Nason's *Presidential Search*. The booklet introduces a serious examination of the social responsibilities of the president's role, especially relating to the selection process, and the involvement of the president's family, if any. *Deciding Who Shall Lead* represents the collective experience of the American Council on Education and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges in working with countless higher education leaders, institutions, and boards during the search process.

## What have we learned?

Board members must think carefully about their approach to the presidential search and the issues confronting the institution before appointing the search committee or taking any other steps. In planning for a search, the board should keep in mind some of the most frequent problems that contribute to an unsuccessful effort—failure to analyze needs, over-adherence to procedures, poor committee structure, inappropriate committee oversight, failure to establish a time frame, poor communication, and lack of confidentiality. The following aspects of the search represent areas in which these problems are most likely to occur. An exploration of these aspects is a good place to begin.

"Strengthening presidential leadership is one of the most urgent concerns on the agenda of higher education in the United States."
Clark Kerr
*University of California*

***Institutional needs.*** Analyzing and defining institutional character and needs and determining the kind of new leadership that can best meet those needs are the first and most basic steps in the search process. The appointment of a new chief executive is not just a problem to be quickly resolved. It represents an opportunity for positive change.

***Active search.*** A good search should be active, not passive. It requires creative energy and thought in every phase. Rather than relying on advertising, posting,

* *Throughout this publication, the term president will be used to represent all other titles used for chief executive officers of higher education institutions.*

and screening applications, search committees should tap a wide variety of informal networks to actively seek names of qualified candidates. Some of the best prospects will need to be sought out and carefully courted.

***Committee organization.*** The composition and quality of the search committee are crucial elements of a successful search. Care and attention should be given to the selection of members. Search committees are often too large and unwieldy. An effective process can be devised that will involve constituencies without creating an unmanageable structure.

***Board oversight.*** In many cases, governing boards have relinquished control of the search process. Delegating too many functions of the search to other individuals can result in boards becoming the least knowledgeable about the conduct of the search and the least acquainted with the finalists.

***Time frame.*** Searches typically take too long. An extended search exhausts committee members and candidates alike by taking many months to do a job that could be condensed considerably, given higher priority and sufficient resources.

***Communications.*** Communication between institutions, candidates, and others involved in the search process (that is, persons making nominations or providing recommendations) is often delayed, inadequate, or otherwise frustrating. Such practices create a negative impression of the institution as a whole. It is never a good idea to withhold information from candidates, whether deliberately or inadvertently by making it difficult for them to obtain. It is easier to make a judgment about an informed candidate than an uninformed one.

***Confidentiality.*** Of particular importance to the search process is guarding against publicly rejecting names of candidates who have not even agreed to be candidates. It also should be remembered that while seeking good communication between involved parties, search committees should avoid excessive publicity and lack of confidentiality. As a result of "leaks," some potentially good leaders may be reluctant to become candidates or may withdraw from the process.

***Assessment of finalists.*** Personal interviews have become overvalued and background checks underutilized. Impressions gained from interviews often are not balanced with other kinds of essential information about candidates. Committees are sometimes dazzled by personality and presence and make premature judgments about candidates.

"……leaders could be more wisely chosen, more securely supported, and hence more quietly effective."
David Riesman
*Harvard University*

***"Two for one" assumption.*** Some search committees consider a presidential couple as the only model to serve the institution. It is essential that committees consider the candidates' qualifications rather than their marital status. Boards should study the various models for handling the social obligations of the presidency that have emerged in recent years. The search should be for an outstanding person, whether married or single. (See "Special Focus on the Social Responsibilities of the President.")

## Recommendations for Improving the Search, Selection, and Negotiation Process

### Assess institutional and community needs

A change of presidential leadership can be a time rich in opportunity — for new vision, renewed energy, fresh perspectives. It is a time to re-examine the state of the institution—its problems, prospects, and challenges—and to shape its direction.

Keeping this opportunity in mind will make the search a positive and energizing experience as opposed to a series of rituals and obstacles to be overcome.

The most important task of the search is to define the needs of the institution and the type of leader best suited to serve them. Although the board is responsible for selecting the new leader, the change in leadership will affect all members of the community and their voices must be heard. The search should begin with consultation with the various constituencies —faculty, students, administrators, staff, alumni, community, and others—to add their perspectives to those of the board. Such involvement at this stage will enhance everyone's trust in and support of the process and, ultimately, of the new appointee. This consultation may be carried out by members of the board, by a designated team from the institution, or by outside consultants.

In anticipating new leadership, it is helpful to note that a new president, however strong and charismatic, cannot lead the institution alone. It takes many people working together, and a good place to start is with the board. A board that is informed, conveys optimism and hope, is energetic, demonstrates commitment, and shows genuine interest in and respect for the views of the academic community can do much to create a positive climate. Incidentally, such a board will be attractive to candidates on the fence. From the beginning to the end of the search, selection, and negotiation process, treating everyone exceedingly well, on and off campus, can create an atmosphere that will benefit the institution for a long time to come.

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### Decide to spend the money

Conducting a successful search is expensive and sufficient resources must be allotted. Major factors to be considered in determining costs include: the time of members of the campus community involved with the search; the communications process—telephone, mail, and public relations; travel for candidates and/or search committee members; and funds for the transition. These costs will be incurred whether or not a professional search firm is involved. Many search committees assign a person full time to staff the search effort. Do not underestimate the staff time required to do a first-rate search. Remember, investment in the search is an investment in the future of the institution.

### Determine whether outside help is needed

One of the realities of presidential searches is that they do not occur often enough for members of search committees to develop much expertise or institutional memory. Most committee members feel ill-prepared for the role. An increasing number of institutions are turning to outside consultants for assistance. If consultants are used it is important that their role be clarified as well as their relationship to the board and the selection committee. Executive search firms

can be helpful, but they need to be chosen carefully, with attention given to extent of services needed, consultant's track record in academic searches, and cost.

If the board is thinking about using a search firm it is wise to consider the following factors: potential for unearthing talented people outside the educational networks; expertise in gathering information on candidates; ability to focus exclusively on the search; knowledge of higher education institutions; experience in including the various educational constituencies in the search process, and costs.

There are many quality executive search firms whose services are available to higher education institutions. Here, as in hiring consultants for other purposes, track record and reputation are important. The Presidential Search Consultation Service (PSCS), a nonprofit service that is part of the higher education community, is sponsored by the Association of Governing Boards. Initiated by the Association of American Colleges, it is endorsed by many educational associations, including the American Council on Education. PSCS provides an especially valuable service to institutions because of its understanding of the academic arena and its knowledge of educational networks and leaders. It works with boards and search committees to complement institutional efforts, not to conduct the search. PSCS concentrates on giving expert advice and assistance at each stage of the process, but leaves the process in the hands of institutional leaders.

### Establish a reasonable time frame

Some presidential searches take far too long because of procrastination, insufficient staff or resources, or the expectation by those in charge that they will add this responsibility to their already full schedules. Institutions and candidates will be better served by a reasonable time frame. The keys to completing a good search within a given time frame are to make sure all those responsible give the search high priority, provide sufficient resources and staff, be results oriented in attitude, and develop momentum early rather than late in the process.

### Establish good relations with the media

Presidential searches do not occur often enough for members of search committees to develop much expertise or institutional memory. Most committee members feel ill-prepared for the role.

Boards should anticipate dealing with the media and develop a plan for working with them. Establishing good relations with the media is wise in all communities, but essential in states governed by "sunshine" laws. Boards should appoint a spokesperson and decide what type of information they will release. The spokesperson or board chair should contact media representatives well in advance of the search to help them understand why confidentiality with respect to the individuals involved is important and to assure them that the process itself will be as open as possible. The balance between deliberate discretion and an open process is a delicate one, but early and consistent contact with the media to educate them and to provide appropriate information is a good investment.

### Actively seek a diverse pool of candidates

Identifying and developing a diverse pool of qualified candidates is one of the

most critical phases of the search process. Most search committees know and practice the formal activities associated with this stage, such as advertising in appropriate journals, sending notices to relevant associations, and writing to knowledgeable people. Some committees also tap informal networks by asking trusted colleagues to suggest persons who merit consideration for the post. Both formal and informal approaches are important. Search committees need to be especially aware of the power of informal networks and to build contacts with persons knowledgeable about women and minorities as well as white males.

Colleagues and friends who are in a position to know leaders and future leaders should be asked for suggestions through personal conversations or letters followed by a telephone call. At this stage, it is not necessary to know the potential candidate's interest in the position. Search committee members should specifically request names of qualified women and minority candidates. Questions to ask the source could include: Have you met anyone in the last few years who especially impressed you as being ready for a presidency? Is there anyone you have worked with on any commission or special project who comes to mind for this particular campus? Have any of your colleagues spoken highly of one who sounds like a person for us to consider? Can you think of some incumbent presidents who are ready to consider a new post?

### Seek realistic qualifications

No candidate is equally strong in all areas and each board must decide what qualities and abilities it needs most in a president. Scholarly credentials and administrative experience are relevant criteria for presidents, but specifying particular credentials and a minimum number of years experience holding a prescribed administrative title are not always helpful. Boards should seek academic credentials appropriate to the nature of the institution and its current needs. Relevant administrative experience should reflect excellence in performance and indicate potential for greater responsibility.

### Question automatic assumptions

**Search committees need to be especially aware of the power of informal networks and to build contacts with persons knowledgeable about women and minorities as well as white males.**

The search and selection process requires numerous decisions about other people, such as deciding who to ask to suggest candidates, which applicants should receive serious consideration, how finalists compare to established criteria, who ultimately will be selected, or which terms are negotiable. Although most people try to make these decisions as objectively as possible, the fact is that accessing individuals, their credentials, and their accomplishments involves constant interpretation. Much of this interpretation is unconsciously influenced by our own unique set of experiences.

Board members need to be aware of how their own backgrounds may bias them in favor of or against candidates because of their involvement or lack of involvement in certain types or classes of institutions, where they got their degrees, number of years in the work force, their sex, race, or ethnicity. Recognizing and discussing these biases very early in the search is most helpful. Stereotypes can significantly affect the way in which people evaluate credentials, ask questions, and interpret responses during interviews.

The resource section includes an excellent publication on examining perceptual bias, entitled, *Seeing and Evaluating People*.

### Protect the integrity of the process

Both openness and confidentiality are needed at different times during the search and great care needs to be given to which is needed when. The best approach is to have the process be as open as possible and to keep the substance confidential. All parties need to have a clear understanding of the roles they will play, the process by which decisions will be made, the calendar or timetable that will be used, and frequent announcements of what may be expected when. Any deviations from previously announced plans should also be shared. On the other hand, it should also be made clear what information will be kept confidential (e.g., names of candidates, information about candidates, emerging preferences) and that all knowledgeable parties should respect this absolutely, as long as legal requirements (e.g., "sunshine" laws) do not otherwise dictate.

The board is ultimately responsible for the process as well as the results and should be highly involved at all stages. There needs to be a clear understanding of the role of those board members who are not serving on the search committee, as well as of those who are. Board members who do serve on the search committee should know everything that happens in the search; they should not delegate so many functions that they know less than others engaged in the process.

Sometimes boards discover that despite good intentions, the search takes on characteristics or problems that are unforeseen and unwanted. For example, the candidate pool may not be sufficiently large, or diverse, leaks may occur that cause a desirable candidate to withdraw prematurely, or emerging finalists do not appear to be outstanding. If such situations should develop, the board can and should redirect, redesign, or simply stop the search rather than let it continue. Indeed, it would be wise to step back periodically in the course of the search to examine how it is going and whether corrective measures are needed.

### Emphasize thorough and timely communication

The chair and staff of the search committee serve as the communication link for the very large number of people who become involved in the search—nominees, candidates, persons making nominations and recommendations, and various constituencies of the institution. Most invest not only their time, but a considerable amount of emotional energy in their particular roles, whether as a candidate or on behalf of a candidate. Warmth and courtesy reflected in timeliness and tone of communications can not only minimize frustration, but also create a positive impression of the institution. Timely notification of candidates at each stage is particularly important.

The board is ultimately responsible for the process as well as the results and should be highly involved at all stages.

In order for all representatives of the institution to see themselves as ambassadors for the institution, it is imperative that the search committee has sufficient resources—funds, staff, and equipment—to do the job.

### Clarify expectations of the nominations process

Nominations may be handled in a number of ways, but each nomination should be an informed one. Persons calling or writing on behalf of a nominee seek to convey, through their description of the candidate or their reputation in the field, that the nominee merits consideration by the committee. If the committee is trying to increase the candidate pool and receives names for which insufficient information is given, it is the committee's responsibility to contact the candidates and request whatever information is needed, for example, a vitae and letter of interest.

Rather than give a firm date by which nominations and applications should be received, search committees should indicate in formal announcements and letters the date on which review of credentials will begin. Such flexibility permits the consideration of candidates who, for whatever reason, enter the process late, while protecting the need of the committee to proceed according to a planned schedule.

### Reconsider the use of letters of recommendation

Although it has long been common practice to require letters of recommendation for candidates, such letters may be more of a problem than a help. Letters reveal less of the writer's real views of a candidate than do personal conversations. Many potential candidates who hold highly visible positions are reluctant to ask colleagues to write in their behalf. Given the questionable value of these letters, the time involved in requesting, writing, and reading them may be wasted.

Boards should consider relying on other sources of information for making decisions about candidates. We specifically recommend not requiring letters of recommendation at the application stage. In the initial stage of review, committees can screen candidates on the basis of nominations received in their behalf, whether written or oral, as well as by a review of the candidate's letter and vitae. After the search committee narrows the candidate pool to a shorter list, it can obtain additional information by telephone. This approach provides an opportunity for the search committee to contact candidates, let them know of the committee's interest, and request names of persons whom it would be appropriate or inappropriate, at this stage, to call. Interviewers need to be coached on how they will represent the institution, what kinds of questions to ask, and how to present information to the committee so that comparison of candidates is possible. Involving all members of the search committee in making the calls not only makes the task manageable, but also facilitates the committee's subsequent work.

Rather than give a firm date by which nominations and applications should be received, search committees should indicate in formal announcements and letters the date on which review of credentials will begin.

Several principles should guide whatever means are used to gather information about candidates: treat candidates equally, keep good records of both telephone and personal conversations, seek quality information, and keep uppermost in mind the goal of finding the best person for the job. Systems that are devised should facilitate, not interfere with that goal.

### Conduct thorough background checks on final candidates

After the search committee selects the finalists, it should make rigorous background checks on each candidate. The purpose of such a review is to obtain in-

formation concerning the candidate's strengths and limitations as a leader based on performance as perceived by colleagues who have worked with the candidate. The committee may conduct review of background by a series of telephone calls or by campus visits, depending upon its resources. It should notify the candidate in advance if it plans a campus visit. The candidate should know when, where, and how the background review is being handled, as well as what kinds of questions will be asked. Campus visits should be conducted with discretion and decorum. The reality is that only one candidate will be selected while all others will remain on their current campuses, so sensitivity and confidentiality are of the highest importance. Information obtained in this stage should be treated with great care and complete confidentiality. Nonetheless, the board must have full information on each candidate before making final decisions.

### Negotiate terms of employment precisely

Once the board extends an offer, it needs to address many issues regarding terms of employment: compensation, fringe benefits, "perks," housing, expectations of social role, role of spouse and family if any, entertainment budget, evaluation of performance, and so on. All too often, boards pay little attention to these concerns, since both sides are exhausted by the search and filled with good feelings about the outcome. Even the conditions for termination of employment should be understood from the beginning. Taking time to address these issues as fully and precisely as possible before formally signing a contract will prevent future misunderstanding, frustration, and regret.

### Announce the appointment privately before going public

The appointment of a new president is big news for the grapevine as well as for the college public relations office. It is human nature to want to make the most of it. Institutions should allow time for the new appointee to notify his or her institution and for the search committee to notify other finalists before they hear or read the news in the public media.

Institutions should allow time for the new appointee to notify his or her institution and for the search committee to notify other finalists before they hear or read the news in the public media.

### Plan and assist in the transition

As Clark Kerr wrote in the recent report on strengthening presidential leadership, "The responsibility of the board for a new president does not end with a sigh of relief and a crossing of the fingers...." (Kerr, 1984). The board needs to be actively involved in the presidential transition. This is most effectively handled if one of the board members, whether the chair or someone so designated, assumes responsibility for the role. The board should designate someone on campus to work in cooperation with the board members to keep the president-elect informed of significant issues, problems, and concerns facing the campus. The transition team should make plans for introducing the new president and any family members to the college community and various constituencies and for sharing insight and information on the subtleties of institutional politics, campus life, and institutional history.

*There are many aspects of the search process that need more detailed discussion. The next section of the booklet concentrates on one often neglected aspect, the social responsibilities of the presidency. A more thorough understanding of these functions and the various options for handling them should help the search committee seek the most talented president and then decide with the president the most suitable ways of dealing with the social responsibilities.*

## Special Focus on the Social Responsibilities of the President

A college president is not simply the chief executive officer of an academic institution—he or she is a living symbol of the college to students, faculty, parents, donors, alumni, and the many other constituents who have a stake in the success of the institution.

With that symbolic role comes an endless series of ceremonial duties that crown and complicate every president's life—attendance at campus sports and cultural events, social events with faculty and students, and breakfasts, lunches, and dinners with donors, board members, legislators, and community groups. These obligations often keep presidents out several evenings a week, working sixteen hours a day, and losing the battle of time for themselves.

For many years the most visible arrangement for handling the social responsibilities of the presidency was the presidential couple. Other ways of handling these functions existed, but were less frequent and considerably less prominent. Today, well into two decades of dramatically changed family and individual roles, there is a need to make clear the multiple options which do exist for addressing these institutional needs and to enable presidents and boards to make choices based on awareness of these options. This is important to do for three reasons: (1) to focus attention on the quality of leadership and on the individual leader selected through the search process; (2) to give that leader a range of options for handling social responsibilities; and (3) to recognize the multiple ways in which families, however constituted, may relate to the college and to give them a range of choices for doing so.

The social dimensions are clearly part of the position and can be handled in a number of ways and by various persons ranging from staff to family. The first step in delineating available options is to recognize that the social responsibilities constitute a job and are necessary for the support of the presidency. Once that is clear, the next step is to determine its nature and obligations. Only then can a decision be made about how the job can best be handled and who can be of most assistance. Each new president must be involved in setting the terms for the person or persons who will carry out these responsibilities, whether staff or volunteers are involved. If the president's family chooses to be involved, there are also many options and the members must be free to define the level and type of contribution that they wish to make to the institution. For example, a parent or spouse may wish to work with students or special events, teach, or represent the president at campus or community activities. Sufficient support within the president's office is a must for whomever handles these responsibilities.

The social dimensions are clearly part of the position and can be handled in a number of ways and by various persons ranging from staff to family.

Since presidents are male and female, married and single, arrangements for carrying out the social responsibilities must

suit the president's personal circumstances. Traditionally, the president's wife has been expected to play a crucial role in organizing many of these functions and in representing the institution—either with her husband or alone. We use the word "wife" advisedly; there is simply no prevailing expectation that husbands of college presidents will function similarly. Many wives are full-time volunteers for the institution, yet their role is often unrecognized and unrewarded. "Two for the price of one" is a dangerous assumption in the eighties, and may well result in unhappy presidents and spouses and severely limit the institution's choice of candidates.

## Consider the options

Boards should candidly discuss their expectations with candidates and determine preferences at the interview stage to prevent later misunderstandings. How can presidents accomplish their important social and ceremonial duties? Happily, there are choices that will permit boards and presidents flexibility in deciding how to fulfill these obligations. Every institution has its own character, needs, and history, so boards and search committees should think as broadly as possible about the suitability and desirability of the various options for their institution.

In all cases the person(s) responsible for the social functions must have adequate support—staff, budget, and empowerment to perform the job—and must work closely with the president's office.

Several models are already in existence to handle this role. Five are presented below:

***The paid staff person.*** Since social obligations are a function of the Office of the President, the president can formally delegate this responsibility to a staff member. A job description might include planning and arranging social functions, identifying alumni, donors, community members, and other constituents to be included at social functions, and coordinating special events with institutional advancement officers and members of the president's family if he or she has family who wish to be consulted.

This staff person would monitor the requests to the president to welcome visiting scholarly or professional groups, to preside at convocations and recognition ceremonies as well as at alumni chapter events, and would be charged with keeping the president's "after-hours" activities within agreed upon boundries.

Many wives are full-time volunteers for the institution, yet their role is often unrecognized and unrewarded. "Two for the price of one" is a dangerous assumption in the eighties.

***The spouse.*** When there is a spouse, she or he may have some involvement with the institution, faculty, students, alumni, and many other groups. Boards should give spouses latitude to define their level and type of involvement. If the spouse volunteers, recognition by the board and community of the job performed, and clear signals to college employees about their responsibilities to the spouse are essential.

A recent survey of presidential spouses by the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges indicated that 20 percent wished to be salaried for their work. Some knotty questions have to be resolved if the spouse is a salaried employee of the institution. For example, is he or she evaluated, and

if so, by whom? What if the spouse's performance is satisfactory, but the president's is not, or vice versa?

Other forms of compensation may be less problematic, for example, retirement plans or annuities; or, spouses might be recognized through endowments or gifts in their names.

***Family members.*** Presidents occasionally utilize the talents of other family members to serve in this capacity. Parents, siblings, and children may reside with the president and volunteer for either the social responsibilities or in other significant ways.

***The volunteer.*** Instead of a paid staff person in the position, the president might recruit a volunteer. Just as leading citizens volunteer for community, civic, and cultural organizations, so might they volunteer to serve as a social outreach officer for the college or university. A volunteer position might also suit the needs of a faculty spouse, retired person, or other person with a commitment to the success of the institution.

***A combination.*** Many different arrangements of the above models can also be used effectively. Part or full-time paid staff working in combination with volunteers or family members offer various opportunities for many different institutions. Paid staff from different parts of the institution can also form a team to coordinate the social responsibilities.

## Issues to discuss with candidates

It is to everyone's advantage to have the new president know as much as possible about the institution he or she will lead. That comprehensive knowledge should include a full understanding of the job's ceremonial and social dimensions. Candidates should know the history of the institution—how the previous president functioned in this capacity, whether or not there was a family, and how the family related to the institution. Among the many areas to discuss:

### *Social*

- What are the social expectations of the president by students, faculty, alumni, donors, community?
- How does the board see the ceremonial role of the president? the spouse or family?
- What staff and budget resources exist to support the president's social and ceremonial obligations?
- Who are the institution's significant constituents and how have they been involved?

### *Personal*

- What housing arrangements would best suit the personal needs of the president and family, if any, and also meet the needs of the college?
- Is there a president's house? Is it furnished? Are there alternatives to the president residing there, such as using the official house for entertaining and living elsewhere?

If the spouse volunteers, recognition by the board and community of the job performed, and clear signals to college employees about their responsibilities to the spouse are essential.

- How can privacy be maintained in an official house?
- What resources will the president and/or family have to maintain and improve the house?
- What resources will be available for child care?
- How will insurance for personal belongings be provided? travel insurance?

***Spouse and family members***

- What role would the spouse or family members like to play?
- What kind of staff and budget support are available?
- Will there be any compensation? Are retirement or annuity plans available?
- What provisions are there for the spouse and/or family members to travel with the president on institutional business, and/or to attend professional meetings at institutional expense?

**Issues for the search committee to consider**

***Seek the best candidate(s).*** We urge search committees not to limit the field of good candidates by considering only the "two for the price of one" model. To consider only married men is not only illegal, but limits the institution's freedom to select the best qualified person. Committees must not lose sight of the task of finding the best candidates whether they are men or women, married or single.

***Think through options for handling the social responsibilities.*** Consider the models presented above and how each might work on your campus. How does the president wish to handle the social responsibilities? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each? If a spouse is involved, then what is the institution's position on paying a salary to the spouse? How does the campus support the efforts of the spouse, or provide recognition and help?

***Discuss the social and personal dimensions of the presidency.*** Obviously, first-time college presidents have no previous experience in negotiating terms of employment of the presidential position. It is only after they have been in the job a while that they realize the important issues that would have been better discussed *before* starting. Candidates who have a spouse and/or family may be reluctant to dwell on, or even bring up, issues such as family roles, staff support for the social functions, and child care allowances. Single candidates may also be reluctant to raise questions about staff support for the social functions. Search committees should not simply respond to the candidate's initiatives, but take the lead in raising these important issues. Also, boards should follow up with the president after he or she has had the opportunity to evaluate the choices made.

Candidates who have a spouse and/or family may be reluctant to dwell on, or even bring up, issues such as family roles, staff support for the social functions, and child care allowances.

***Invite finalists' families, if any, to visit the campus.*** Since the job of president affects the whole family, and above all the spouse, it is important to invite them to campus before the selection committee makes its final decision. The candidate's spouse will want to know the board's expectations and will want to share his or her own plans and preferences. If there is a presidential residence, the family will want to see it and know what latitude there is to modify and

maintain it. A visit to the community and information about schools and, if necessary, housing, will be high on their agenda.

***Ease the new president's transition.*** The first few months of a presidency are key, and it is not safe to assume that everything will work according to plan. Are there problems with the president's house? Are the staffing and support arrangements working? Are there any individuals creating unnecessary problems for the new president? A transition committee can take the burden off a new president who may be reluctant to raise seemingly "trivial" issues so soon after he or she has started.

### Points to remember

- Advertise or openly communicate a willingness to consider and meet the needs of presidential candidates whatever their marital and family circumstances.
- Invite families, if any, of final candidates to campus for discussions.
- Explicitly discuss the ceremonial and social roles and expectations of the president early in the selection process.
- Ask the presidential candidate his or her preferences for handling the social responsibilities function early in the selection process.
- Provide budget support for the ceremonial and social functions, including salary (for a professional or possibly the spouse), whether or not this has been traditional at the institution.
- Offer assistance in relocation—including housing changes, schooling of children, spouse's ongoing career needs and job change, and so on.
- Make explicit provision for review of the arrangements in place for handling the social responsibilities within the first year of the president's tenure.

In conclusion, the selection of a new chief executive officer represents a fine opportunity for boards to guide their institutions through a healthy process of self-assessment and to open new possibilities and directions for the entire community. A good search will benefit the institution and its new leader for many years to come.

Since the job of president affects the whole family, and above all the spouse, it is important to invite them to campus before the selection committee makes its final decision.

## Brief Review of Steps in the Search, Selection and Negotiation Process

When the current leadership resigns, the following general steps need to occur:

Assess institutional needs.

Determine process and timetable for conducting search and making final selection.

Select committee members, clarify mandate, and provide adequate resources.

Develop criteria for selection, and determine conditions of employment.

Design communications process with candidates and others to provide needed information in a timely and courteous manner.

Develop pool of qualified candidates which includes men and women, majority and minority.

Screen candidates to "select list" of those most able to meet the needs of the institution.

Collect additional information on "select list" to further narrow the field.

Choose finalists and collect additional information on them.

Interview finalists and conduct background reviews.

Evaluate candidates by comparing each to established criteria.

Offer job to top candidate.

Negotiate terms of employment.

Notify all persons involved in process.

Announce appointment.

Plan transition.

Prepare final reports for historical and future use.

Detailed information on the various phases of the search, selection, and negotiation process is provided in Nason's work, cited in the resource section.

## Resources


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"Good leaders must not only have vision—they must stay closely connected to those who will help them achieve that vision."

Janet Greenwood

*Longwood College*

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